

## CLAIMS

1. A method for storing messages in a multimedia mail system to save air interface bandwidth, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a call from a first user of a first device to a second user of a second device;

5 making a determination as to whether the second user is available;  
providing the first user with an option to send a multimedia mail message if the second user is not available;

changing bandwidth requirements for the call if the first user elects to send a multimedia mail message;

10 sending the multimedia mail message to the multimedia mail system; and  
storing the multimedia mail message in the multimedia mail system until the multimedia mail message is retrieved by the second user.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the first device is one of a wireless telephone, a computer and a personal digital assistant.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the second device is one of a wireless telephone, a computer and a personal digital assistant.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the second user retrieves the multimedia mail message from the multimedia mail system by one of streaming and downloading.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the option to send a multimedia mail message is provided to the first user in an HTML (HyperText Markup Language) menu.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein prior to the step of storing, the method comprises the steps of:

recording the multimedia mail message with a camera coupled to the first device.

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7. In a wireless system that couples users of wireless devices for voice and multimedia communications over-the-air, a multimedia-based answering system for lowering the amount of air interface bandwidth used to send multimedia mail messages comprising:

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a processor-based apparatus that:

provides a first user of a first device with an option to send a multimedia mail message when a second user of a second device is not available; and

changes bandwidth requirements for the call if the first user elects

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to send a multimedia mail message; and

a multimedia mail system that:

stores the multimedia mail message until the multimedia mail message is retrieved by the second user.

8. The multimedia-based answering system of claim 7 wherein the first device is one of a wireless telephone, a computer and a personal digital assistant.

9. The multimedia-based answering system of claim 7 wherein the second device is one of a wireless telephone, a computer and a personal digital assistant.

10. The multimedia-based answering system of claim 7 wherein the first device records the multimedia mail message with a camera that is coupled to the first device.

11. The multimedia-based answering system of claim 7 wherein the second user retrieves the multimedia mail message by one of streaming and downloading.

12. The multimedia-based answering system of claim 7 wherein the option to send a multimedia mail message is provided to the user of the first device in an HTML (HyperText Markup Language) menu.